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(REV. 5-93)U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICEATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER
10191/1690**TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES
DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US)
CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. 371**

U.S. APPLICATION NO. (If known, see 37 CFR 1.5)

09/762985INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.
PCT/DE00/01835INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE
(06.06.00)
6 June 2000PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED:
(20.07.99)
20 July 1999TITLE OF INVENTION
DEVICE AND METHOD FOR ETCHING A SUBSTRATE USING AN INDUCTIVELY COUPLED PLASMAAPPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US
BECKER, Volker; LAERMER, Franz; and SCHILP, Andrea.

Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information

1. ☒ This is a **FIRST** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
2. ☐ This is a **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
3. ☒ This express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)) immediately rather than delay examination until the expiration of the applicable time limit set in 35 U.S.C. 371(b) and PCT Articles 22 and 39(1).
4. ☐ A proper Demand for International Preliminary Examination was made by the 19th month from the earliest claimed priority date.
5. ☒ A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2))
 - a. ☐ is transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau).
 - b. ☒ has been transmitted by the International Bureau.
 - c. ☐ is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US)
6. ☒ A translation of the International Application into English (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)).
7. ☒ Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3))
 - a. ☐ are transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau).
 - b. ☐ have been transmitted by the International Bureau.
 - c. ☐ have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired.
 - d. ☒ have not been made and will not be made.
8. ☐ A translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).
9. ☒ An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(4)).
10. ☐ A translation of the annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(5)).

Items 11. to 16. below concern other document(s) or information included:

11. ☒ An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.
12. ☒ An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.
13. ☒ A **FIRST** preliminary amendment.
☐ A **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** preliminary amendment.
14. ☐ A substitute specification.
15. ☐ A change of power of attorney and/or address letter.
16. ☒ Other items or information: International Search Report; and PCT/RO/101.

EXPRESS MAIL NO.: **EL 234 413 077 US**

U.S. APPLICATION NO. 09/762985
37 C.F.R. 1.5

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.
PCT/DE00/01835

ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER
10191/1690

17. ☒ The following fees are submitted:

Basic National Fee (37 CFR 1.492(a)(1)-(5)):

Search Report has been prepared by the EUROPEAN PATENT OFFICE or
JPO \$860.00

International preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.482) \$690.00

No international preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.482) but
international search fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) \$710.00

Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor international search
fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO \$1000.00

International preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.482) and all claims
satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(2)-(4) \$100.00

CALCULATIONS | PTO USE ONLY

ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT = \$ 860.00

Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than ☐ 20 ☐ 30 months
from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(e)).

\$

Claims	Number Filed	Number Extra	Rate	
Total Claims	30 - 20 =	10	X \$18.00	\$ 180.00
Independent Claims	1 - 3 =	0	X \$80.00	\$ 0
Multiple dependent claim(s) (if applicable)			+ \$270.00	\$ 0

TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS = \$1040.00

Reduction by 1/2 for filing by small entity, if applicable. Verified Small Entity statement must
also be filed. (Note 37 CFR 1.9, 1.27, 1.28).

\$

SUBTOTAL = \$1040.00

Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later the ☐ 20 ☐ 30
months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(f)).

+

\$

TOTAL NATIONAL FEE = \$1040.00

Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be
accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28, 3.31). \$40.00 per property

+

\$

TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED = \$1040.00

Amount to be:

refunded \$

charged \$

a. ☐ A check in the amount of \$_____ to cover the above fees is enclosed.

b. ☒ Please charge my Deposit Account No. 11-0600 in the amount of **\$1040.00** to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this
sheet is enclosed.

c. ☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit
Account No. 11-0600. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137(a) or (b)) must be
filed and granted to restore the application to pending status.

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2/15/01
DATE

EXPRESS MAIL CERTIFICATE

"EXPRESS MAIL" MAILING LABEL NUMBER EL234413077US

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TYPE OF DOCUMENT National Phase Application

SERIAL NO. Deferred FILING DATE Herewith

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PAPER OR FEE IS BEING DEPOSITED WITH THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE "EXPRESS MAIL POST OFFICE TO ADDRESSEE" SERVICE UNDER 37 CFR 1.10 ON THE DATE INDICATED ABOVE, BY BEING HANDED TO A POSTAL CLERK OR BY BEING PLACED IN THE EXPRESS MAIL BOX BEFORE THE POSTED DATE OF THE LAST PICK UP, AND IS ADDRESSED TO THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20231.

CHRISTOPHER ASH

(PRINTED NAME OF PERSON MAILING PAPER OR FEE)

Christopher Ash

(SIGNATURE OF PERSON MAILING PAPER OR FEE)

Title: Device and method for etching a substrate using an inductively coupled plasma.

09/762985-050801

09/762985

JC02 Rec'd PCT/PTO 15 FEB 2001

[10191/1690]

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Inventor(s) : Volker BECKER et al.
Serial No. : To Be Assigned
Filed : Herewith
For : DEVICE AND METHOD FOR ETCHING A
SUBSTRATE USING AN INDUCTIVELY
COUPLED PLASMA
Examiner : To Be Assigned
Art Unit : To Be Assigned

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

SIR:

Kindly amend the above-identified application before examination as set forth below.

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

On page 1, line 5, insert: --FIELD OF THE INVENTION-- .

On page 1, line 11, delete "Background Information" and insert:
--DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART--.

On page 3, line 7, delete "Advantages of the Invention" and insert:
--SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION-- .

On page 7, line 7, delete "Drawings" and insert:
--BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS--.

Page 7, line 26, delete "Exemplary Embodiments" and insert:
--DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION--.

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IN THE CLAIMS:

On page 34, line 1, delete "Claims" and insert:

--WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:--.

Cancel claims 1-30, without prejudice.

Add the following new claims 31-60:

--31. (New) A device for etching a silicon body substrate (10) using an inductively coupled plasma (14), comprising: an ICP source (13) for generating a radio-frequency electromagnetic alternating field; a reactor (15) for generating the inductively coupled plasma (14) from reactive particles by the action of the radio-frequency electromagnetic alternating field on a reactive gas, and a first means for generating plasma power pulses to be injected into the inductively coupled plasma (14) by the ICP source (13).

32. (New) The device according to Claim 31, wherein the first means is an ICP coil generator (17) which generates a variably adjustable, pulsed radio-frequency power with regard to the pulse to pause ratio of the plasma power pulses or the individual pulse power.

33. (New) The device according to Claim 32, further comprising an impedance transformer (18) in the form of a balanced symmetrical matching network for matching an initial impedance of the ICP coil generator (17) to a plasma impedance which is dependent on the individual pulse power of the plasma power pulses to be injected.

34. (New) The device according to Claim 33, wherein the impedance transformer (18) is preset in such a way that with a specified maximum individual pulse power of the plasma power pulses to be injected into the inductively coupled plasma (14) in the case of stationary power, a substantially optimum impedance matching is ensured.

35. (New) The device according to Claim 32, wherein components are integrated into the ICP coil generator (17) which, via a variation of the frequency of the generated electromagnetic alternating field, perform impedance matching as a function of the individual pulse power to be injected.

36. (New) The device according to Claim 35, wherein the ICP coil generator (17) includes an automatically acting feedback circuit having a frequency-selective component (1), the feedback circuit having at least one controlled power amplifier, a frequency-selective band filter with a stationary frequency (1'') to be attained and a delay line (7) or a phase shifter.

37. (New) The device according to Claim 31, further comprising a second means for generating a static or time-variable, particularly pulsed magnetic field between the substrate (10) and the ICP source (13).

38. (New) The device according to Claim 37, wherein the first means is a magnetic field coil (21) with an associated power supply unit (23) or a permanent magnet, the magnetic field generated by the magnetic field coil (21) via the power supply unit (23) being time-variable, capable of being pulsed in particular.

39. (New) The device according to Claim 31, further comprising a substrate voltage generator (12) which can apply a continuous or time-variable radio-frequency power, a pulsed radio-frequency power in particular, to a substrate (10) arranged on a substrate electrode (11).

40. (New) The device according to Claim 39, further comprising a first impedance transformer (12) for impedance matching between the substrate voltage generator (12) and the substrate (10).

41. (New) The device according to Claim 39, wherein an ICP coil generator (17) is connected to the substrate voltage generator (12) or a power supply unit (23).

42. (New) A method for etching a silicon body substrate (10) using the device according to Claim 31, comprising the step of injecting a pulsed radio-frequency power into the inductively coupled plasma (14) as a pulsed plasma power.

43. (New) The method according to Claim 42, wherein the pulsed plasma power is injected via an ICP source (13) to which a radio-frequency electromagnetic alternating field

having a constant frequency or a frequency which varies within a frequency range is applied around a stationary frequency (1'').

44. (New) The method according to Claim 42, wherein the pulsed radio-frequency power is generated with an ICP coil generator (17) which is pulse-operated with a frequency of 10 Hz to 1 MHz and pulse to pause ratio of 1:1 to 1:100.

45. (New) The method according to Claim 42, wherein a plasma power of 300 watts to 5000 watts on the time average is injected into the inductively coupled plasma (14) and that the generated individual pulse powers of the radio-frequency power pulses are between 300 watts and 20 kilowatts, in particular 2 kilowatts to 10 kilowatts.

46. (New) The method according to Claim 42, wherein the pulsing of the injected radio-frequency power is accompanied by a change of the frequency of the injected radio-frequency power, the frequency change being controlled in such a way that the plasma power injected into the inductively coupled plasma (14) during the pulsing is maximized.

47. (New) The method according to Claim 42, wherein during the etching, a static or time-variable, in particular periodically varying or pulsed magnetic field is generated, the direction of which is at least approximately or predominantly parallel to a direction defined by the connecting line of the substrate (10) and the inductively coupled plasma (14).

48. (New) The method according to Claim 47, wherein the magnetic field is generated in such a way that it extends into the area of the substrate (10) and the inductively coupled plasma (14) and has a field strength amplitude between 10 MTesla and 100 mTesla in the interior of the reactor (15).

49. (New) The method according to Claim 47, wherein a magnetic field pulsed at a frequency of 10 Hz to 20 kHz is generated via the power supply unit (23), the pulse to pause ratio when the magnetic field is pulsed being between 1:1 and 1:100.

50. (New) The method according to Claim 42, wherein a constant or time-variable, in particular pulsed, radio-frequency power is applied to the substrate (10) via a substrate voltage generator (12).

51. (New) The method according to Claim 50, wherein the pulse duration of the radio-frequency power injected into the substrate is between one to one hundred times, one to ten times in particular, the period of oscillation of the high-frequency fundamental component of the radio-frequency power.

52. (New) The method according to Claim 50, wherein the radio-frequency power applies a time-average power of 5 watts to 100 watts to the substrate (10), the maximum power of an individual radio-frequency power pulse being one to 20 times, in particular twice to 10 times, the time average power.

53. (New) The method according to Claim 51, wherein the frequency of the injected radio-frequency power is between 100 kHz to 100 MHz, 13.56 MHz in particular, and that the pulse to pause ratio of the injected radio-frequency pulses is between 1:1 and 1:100, 1:1 and 1:10 in particular.

54. (New) The method according to Claim 42, wherein the pulsing of the injected plasma power and the pulsing of the radio-frequency power injected into the substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12) or the pulsing of the magnetic field, the pulsing of the injected plasma power and the pulsing of the radio-frequency power injected into the substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12) are time-correlated or synchronized with each other.

55. (New) The method according to Claim 54, wherein the correlation takes place in such a way that the magnetic field is first applied, before a radio-frequency power pulse of the ICP coil generator (17), and the magnetic field is switched off again after the decay of this radio-frequency power pulse.

56. (New) The method according to Claim 54, wherein the correlation takes place in such a way that during a radio-frequency power pulse of the ICP coil generator (17), the

radio-frequency power injected into the substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12) is switched off and/or that during a radio-frequency power pulse injected into the substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12), the radio-frequency power injected via the ICP coil generator (17) is switched off.

57. (New) The method according to Claim 54, wherein the synchronization takes place in such a way that during each time of a plasma power pulse injected into the plasma (14) via the ICP coil generator (17), radio-frequency pulses injected into the substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12) are also applied to the substrate (10).

58. (New) The method according to Claim 54, wherein the correlation takes place in such a way that the radio-frequency power injected into the substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12) is generated in each case during a power rise and/or a power drop of a radio-frequency power pulse injected into the plasma (14) via the ICP coil generator (17).

59. (New) The method according to Claim 54, wherein the correlation takes place in such a way that during the time of the plasma power pulses injected into the plasma (14) via the ICP coil generator (17) and during the time of the pulse pauses between the individual plasma power pulses injected into the plasma (14) via the ICP coil generator (17), at least one radio-frequency power pulse injected into the substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12) is applied to the substrate (10) in each case.

60. (New) The method according to Claim 42, wherein the etching takes place in alternating etching and passivation steps at a process pressure of 5 μ bar to 100 μ bar.--

Remarks

This Preliminary Amendment cancels, without prejudice, original claims 1-30 in the underlying PCT Application No. PCT/DE00/01835. These claims have been rewritten as new claims 31-60 so as to conform the claims to U.S. Patent and Trademark Office rules, and they do not add new matter to the application.

The above amendments to the specification and abstract conform the specification and abstract to U.S. Patent and Trademark Office rules and incorporate any

changes made in the underlying PCT application during the international stage. These amendments do not introduce any new matter into the application.

The underlying PCT Application No. PCT/DE00/01835 includes an International Search Report, dated November 22, 2000. The Search Report includes a list of documents that were uncovered in the search for the underlying PCT Application. A copy of the Search Report is included herewith.

Applicants assert that the subject matter of the present application is new, non-obvious, and useful. Prompt consideration and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard L. Mayer

Dated: 2/15/01

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[10191/1690]

DEVICE AND METHOD FOR ETCHING A SUBSTRATE USING AN
INDUCTIVELY COUPLED PLASMA

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The invention relates to a device and a method which can be implemented with it for etching a substrate, a silicon body in particular, using an inductively coupled plasma according to the species of the independent claims.

Background Information

In order to implement an anisotropic high-rate etching method, for silicon for example, using an inductive plasma source, in methods such as those known from German Patent 42 41 045 C2, for example, it is necessary to bring about an efficient sidewall passivation in the shortest possible time during passivation steps and moreover to achieve as high a concentration as possible of silicon-etching fluorine radicals during etching steps. In order to increase the etching rate, an obvious step is to work with maximally high radio-frequency powers at the inductive plasma source and as a result, to inject maximally high plasma powers into the produced inductively coupled plasma.

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However, these injectable plasma powers are subject to limits resulting firstly from the load carrying capacity of the electrical components and secondly from the nature of the process. Consequently, high radio-frequency powers of the inductive plasma source, i.e., high plasma powers to be injected, intensify harmful electrical effects from the source area on the produced inductively coupled plasma which adversely affect the etching results on the substrate wafer.

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In addition, in etching processes of the type described in German Patent 42 41 045 C2, with very high plasma powers, stability problems also occur in injecting the plasma during the switching phases between etching and passivation steps.

5 This stems from the fact that power reflection and overvoltage occurring with high powers in the kilowatt range to be injected during the switching phases have a destructive effect on the electrical circuit of the plasma source (coil, connected capacitors, generator output stages, etc.).

10 An inductive plasma source which has already been further developed in relation to German Patent 42 41 045 C2 is described in German Patent Application 199 00 179, this plasma source being suitable for particularly high plasma powers by virtue of a loss-free symmetrical radio-frequency feeding of the coil of the inductive plasma source and generating an inductive plasma which is particularly low in injected disturbances. However, for this source type as well, the practicable power limit ranges from approximately 3 kilowatts to 5 kilowatts, above which the required radio-frequency components become extremely expensive or problems with regard to plasma stability become excessive.

25 German Patent Application 199 198 32 further makes known a method in which the plasma power injected into an inductively coupled plasma having a radio-frequency electromagnetic alternating field is varied adiabatically between individual procedure steps, alternating etching and passivation steps in particular.

30 Such an adiabatic power transition, i.e., a gradual increase or reduction of the injected plasma power, with simultaneous continuous matching of the impedance of the ICP source to the particular plasma impedance as a function of the injected
35 plasma power via an automatic matching network or an impedance transformer (matchbox) makes it possible to control the above-mentioned problems with regard to power reflection and

overvoltage when switching plasma powers ranging from 1 kilowatt to 5 kilowatts on and off. However, a typical duration of the closing operations ranges from 0.1 seconds to 2 seconds. Faster changes in power are not possible with this approach.

Advantages of the Invention

In contrast to the known methods, the device according to the present invention and the method implemented with it has the advantage that a variably adjustable, pulsed radio-frequency power is generated with it which can be injected into the inductively coupled plasma as a plasma power, it being possible for the pulsing of the plasma power to take place very rapidly, within microseconds for example, and simultaneously being combined with power changes of several thousand watts.

In addition, the implemented pulsing of the plasma power is associated with an essential improvement in the efficiency of the ICP source and opens up the possibility to reduce the mean plasma power without a reduction in the etching rate or to increase the etching rate with an unaltered mean plasma power. Moreover, pulsing of the plasma power makes it possible to effectively reduce electrical disturbance effects from the source area of the ICP source.

Advantageous refinements of the invention result from the measures named in the dependent claims.

It is thus particularly advantageous if the plasma etching system according to the present invention is provided with a balanced, symmetrically designed and symmetrically supplied configuration of the ICP source. In this manner the homogeneity of the etching rates over the surface of the substrate is distinctly improved and the electrical injection of high plasma powers into the plasma generated is

considerably simplified.

Moreover, it is advantageous if an additional, constant or chronologically varying longitudinal magnetic field is generated in the interior of the reactor, the magnetic field guiding the generated, inductively coupled plasma as a type of magnetic cylinder from the plasma source to the substrate to be etched.

This magnetic field, whose direction is at least approximately or predominantly parallel to the direction defined by the connecting line of the substrate and inductively coupled plasma, distinctly improves the utilization of the injected radio-frequency power to produce the desired plasma species (electrons, ions, free radicals), i.e., the efficiency of plasma generation. Therefore, distinctly higher etching rates are additionally possible with the same plasma power.

A particularly good guidance of the generated plasma through the magnetic field and a particularly low feedthrough of the generated magnetic field onto the substrate to be etched itself is advantageously brought about if an aperture arranged concentrically to the interior wall of the reactor is additionally provided, the aperture preferably being arranged approximately 5 cm above the substrate arranged on a substrate electrode. This aperture results in an improved uniformity of the etching over the substrate surface and simultaneously prevents high induced voltages in the substrate to be etched in the case of a magnetic field varying over time, which could possibly result in damage to electronic components.

Moreover, it is very advantageous if components are integrated in the ICP coil generator that bring about a variation of the frequency of the generated electromagnetic alternating field for the impedance matching as a function of the plasma power to be injected since this results in particularly rapid switching between plasma power pulses and interpulse periods.

These frequency variations advantageously result in the avoidance of occasional high reflected powers back into the ICP coil generator when the plasma power is pulsed, in particular in times of a rapidly changing injected plasma power, i.e., in pulse to pause transitions. An additional essential advantage of an optimum impedance matching at any time via a variable frequency of the radio-frequency power of the ICP coil generator is that this frequency change can be performed very rapidly since it is only limited by the control rate of the electronic circuit performing the frequency variation. Thus response times or very fast power changes of the output power of the ICP coil generator are possible in a stable manner in the microsecond range, which makes it possible to work with plasma power pulses, the duration of which is in the microsecond range, during the etching and/or passivation steps.

Since very rapid impedance changes occur in the plasma with pulsed operation of the ICP source, according to the previous related art methods with individual pulse powers in the kilowatt range, in particular in the range above 3 kilowatts, it has been impossible to avoid the occurrence of high reflected power when switching the injected radio-frequency pulses on and off or to at least render them harmless. In contrast, the device according to the present invention ensures the impedance matching of the inductively coupled plasma or ICP source and ICP coil generator at any time, even in this case.

In contrast to continuous operation, pulsed operation of the ICP source has the further essential advantage that an essentially higher plasma density is attained during the radio-frequency power pulses or plasma power pulses than with continuous operation. This is based on the fact that generation of an inductive plasma is to a high degree a non-linear process so that the mean plasma density in this pulsed operation is higher than with a mean plasma power

corresponding to the time average. Therefore, effectively more reactive species and ions are obtained over the time average in pulse operation than in continuous operation. This applies in particular when "giant pulses" are used, i.e., relatively short and extremely powerful radio-frequency power pulses of, for example, 20 kilowatts peak power, as is now possible with the device of the invention, the mean plasma power over the time average then being only 500 watts, for example.

Moreover, unavoidable heat losses in the ICP coil generator and other system components of the plasma etching system are advantageously correlated with the relatively low plasma power over the time average in this case, while desired plasma effects, the obtainable etching rates in particular, advantageously correlate with the occurring peak powers. Consequently, the efficiency of the generation of reactive species and ions is distinctly improved.

A further advantage of a pulsed operation of the ICP source is that disturbing electrical charges on the substrate to be etched can be discharged during the pauses between the radio-frequency power pulses and consequently profile control during etching is improved as a whole.

Finally, it is very advantageous if the pulsing of the generated magnetic field is correlated chronologically or synchronized with the pulsing of the injected plasma power and/or the pulsing of the radio-frequency power injected into the substrate via the substrate voltage generator. Thus the chronological synchronization of the pulsing of the magnetic field and injected plasma power in particular brings about a distinct reduction of the ohmic heat losses occurring in the magnetic field coil, which mitigates problems of cooling and temperature control of the magnetic field coil.

If, for example, the injected plasma power is operated at a pulse to pause ratio of 1:20, the current through the magnetic

field coil can also be pulsed, for example, at a pulse to
pause ratio of 1:18, advantageously resulting in a reduction
of the required heat transfer from the magnetic field coil to
1/18 of the original value. Simultaneously, the consumption of
5 electrical power is also reduced accordingly.

Drawings

Exemplary embodiments of the present invention are explained
10 with reference to the drawings and in the following
description. Figure 1 shows a schematic view of a plasma
etching system; Figure 2 shows an electronic feedback circuit
with a connected ICP source, Figure 3 shows an example of a
filter characteristic, Figure 4 shows an example of a
5 chronological synchronization of radio-frequency plasma power
pulses with magnetic field pulses, Figure 5 shows a circuit
configuration for the generation of very short radio-frequency
power pulses which can be integrated in the substrate voltage
generator, Figure 6 shows an equivalent circuit diagram for
10 the origination of the substrate electrode voltage, and Figure
7 shows the change in the substrate electrode voltage during a
radio-frequency power pulse as a function of the number of the
oscillation periods.

Exemplary Embodiments

A first exemplary embodiment of the present invention is
explained in greater detail with reference to Figure 1. For
30 this purpose, a plasma etching system 5 first has a reactor
15, in whose upper area an inductively coupled plasma 14 is
generated in a manner known per se via an ICP source 13
(inductively coupled plasma). Additionally provided are a gas
supply 14 for the supply of a reactive gas such as SF_6 , ClF_3 ,
35 O_2 , C_4F_8 , C_3F_6 , SiF_4 or NF_3 , a gas discharge 20 for the discharge
of reaction products, a substrate 10, for example, a silicon
body or silicon wafer to be structured using the etching

method of the present invention, a substrate electrode 11 being in contact with substrate 10, a substrate voltage generator 12, and a first impedance transformer 16. Substrate voltage generator 12 injects a high-frequency AC voltage into substrate electrode 11 and through it into substrate 10, the high-frequency AC voltage bringing about an acceleration of ions produced in inductively coupled plasma 14 onto substrate 10. The radio-frequency power or AC voltage injected into substrate electrode 11 is typically between 3 watts and 50 watts and 5 volts and 100 volts, respectively, in continuous operation and in pulsed operation, respectively, each in the time average over the pulse sequence.

In addition, an ICP coil generator 17 is provided which is connected to a second impedance transformer 18 and via it to ICP source 13. Thus ICP source 13 generates a radio-frequency electromagnetic alternating field and via it an inductively coupled plasma 14 of reactive particles and electrically charged particles (ions) in reactor 15 which are generated by the action of the radio-frequency electromagnetic alternating field on the reactive gas. For this purpose, ICP source 13 has a coil having at least one turn.

Second impedance transformer 18 is preferably designed in the manner proposed in German Patent Application 199 00 179.0 resulting in a balanced, symmetrically structured configuration and supply of ICP source 13 via ICP coil generator 17. Thus it is ensured in particular that the high-frequency AC voltages applied to both ends of the coil of ICP source 13 are at least nearly in phase opposition to each other. In addition, center tap 26 of the coil of ICP source 13 is, as is suggested in Figure 2, preferably grounded.

Moreover, the anisotropic high-rate etching process for silicon with alternating etching and passivation steps, which is known from German Patent 42 41 045 C2, is carried out with plasma etching system 5. With regard to additional details

concerning plasma etching system 5, which are known per se to a person skilled in the art, and the associated etching method, in particular with regard to the reactive gases, the process pressures and the substrate electrode voltages in the respective etching steps and passivation steps, the reference is therefore made to German Patent 42 41 045 C2.

In other respects, plasma etching system 5 of the present invention is also suited for a process control as described in German Patent Application 19927806.7.

In particular, when substrate 10 is etched during the passivation steps, passivation is carried out in reactor 15 with a process pressure of 5 μ bar to 20 μ bar and at a mean plasma power of 300 to 1000 watts injected into plasma 14 via ICP source 13. Examples of suitable passivation gases are C_4F_8 or C_3F_8 . During the subsequent etching steps, etching is then carried out at a process pressure of 30 μ bar to 50 μ bar and at a high mean plasma power of 1000 to 5000 watts. Examples of suitable reactive gases are SF_6 or ClF_3 . For the purposes of the invention, mean plasma power is understood to be a coupled plasma power time averaged over a large number of plasma power pulses.

In addition, a spacer 22 of a non-ferromagnetic material such as aluminum is placed in plasma etching system 5 between inductively coupled plasma 14, i.e., ICP source 13, i.e., the actual plasma excitation zone, and substrate 10. This spacer 22 is inserted concentrically into the wall of reactor 15 as a spacer ring and thus forms the reactor wall in some areas. It has a typical height of approximately 5 cm to 30 cm for a typical reactor 15 diameter of 30 cm to 100 cm.

In a preferred form of the exemplary embodiment, spacer 22 is further surrounded by a magnetic field coil 21 which has, for example, 100 to 1000 turns and is wound from an enameled copper wire which is dimensioned to be of adequate gage for

In any case, it is important for the direction of the magnetic field generated via magnetic field coil 21 or the permanent magnets to be at least approximately or predominantly parallel to the direction defined by the connecting line of substrate 10 and inductively coupled plasma 14, i.e., the plasma excitation zone (longitudinal magnetic field orientation).

Moreover, in an additional advantageous form of the explained exemplary embodiment, in order to improve the uniformity of the etching process, an aperture known from German Patent 197 34 278 is provided in the interior of reactor 15 concentric to the reactor wall between ICP source 13, i.e., the plasma excitation zone, and substrate 10. This aperture is not shown in Figure 1 for reasons of clarity. Preferably, it is attached to spacer 22 approximately 5 cm above substrate electrode 11 or substrate 10.

In addition, in the event a magnetic field coil 21 is used, a suitable monitoring device, which is known per se, must be integrated in power supply unit 23, the monitoring device being incorporated in the process control and monitoring the coil temperature and performing an emergency shutdown in the event of a coolant water failure, for example.

In addition, during the etching steps and/or during the passivation steps, ICP coil generator 17 injects a pulsed plasma power into inductively coupled plasma 14 which, on a time average, is between a minimum of 300 watts and a maximum of 5000 watts. Preferably, on a time average, 2000 watts are injected during the etching steps and 500 watts during the passivation steps.

In order too make the pulsing of the injected plasma power possible, it is further provided that during the pulsing, the impedance of the radio-frequency power generated via ICP coil generator 17 is continuously matched to the plasma impedance which changes as the plasma power is changed, i.e., pulsed.

For this purpose, the frequency of the radio-frequency electromagnetic alternating field generated by ICP coil generator 17 is varied for impedance matching within a specified bandwidth.

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In particular, the preferably symmetrically designed adaptor network in the second impedance transformer 18 which feeds ICP source 13 symmetrically is initially adjusted for this purpose in such a way that the best possible impedance matching is always present when the injected radio-frequency plasma power pulses have reached their maximum value. Typical maximum values are between 3 kilowatts and 20 kilowatts at a pulse to pause ratio of 1:1 to 1:10.

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In addition, the frequency variation of the coupled electromagnetic alternating field takes place in such a way that when the maximum values of the radio-frequency plasma power pulses are attained, stationary or resonance frequency 1'' of the radio-frequency electromagnetic alternating field generated by ICP coil generator 17 is attained simultaneously. Stationary frequency 1'' is preferably 13.56 MHz.

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The frequency of the electromagnetic alternating field is varied around stationary frequency 1'' when the plasma power is pulsed in order to ensure that when the plasma power is pulsed, there is always an at least extensive matching of the impedance of the generated radio-frequency power, i.e., of ICP coil generator 17 to the impedance of plasma 14 which changes over time as a function of the plasma power. For this purpose, the frequency of ICP coil generator is enabled within a specific bandwidth around stationary frequency 1'' and is varied within this bandwidth for impedance matching by an electronic control.

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This frequency variation is explained with the aid of Figure 3 in which a filter characteristic 1' is shown which specifies a preset frequency range (bandwidth) within which the frequency

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of ICP coil generator 17 is varied, each frequency being assigned a specific radio-frequency power, i.e., a plasma power to be injected, respectively, or an attenuation A of the output of ICP coil generator 17. The frequency to be attained in the stationary power case is stationary frequency 1'' which is at least approximately present if the particular maximum power of the pulse is attained during a plasma power pulse.

Further details of a suitable electronic circuit for impedance matching by frequency variation in the form of an automatically operating feedback circuit are explained with the aid of Figure 2. ICP source 13, i.e., specifically its coil, is initially supplied by a preferably balanced symmetrical matching network 2 from an unbalanced asymmetrical output of ICP coil generator 17 in a manner known per se from German Patent 199 00 179. Matching network 2 is a part of the second impedance transformer 18. In addition, ICP coil generator 17 has a radio-frequency power amplifier 3 and a quartz oscillator 4 for generating a high-frequency fundamental component with a fixed frequency of, for example, 13.56 MHz.

In the related art methods, the radio-frequency fundamental component of quartz oscillator 4 is normally supplied to the amplifier input of power amplifier 3. However, this supply is first modified to the effect that quartz oscillator 4 is first isolated from the amplifier input of power amplifier 3 at least during the power change phases and its input is made accessible externally, for example, via a matching input socket. Since quartz oscillator 4 no longer has a function in this embodiment, it may also be suitably deactivated.

In other respects, in the stationary case, i.e., after completion of a power variation, it is also possible to switch quartz oscillator 4 back to the amplifier input and to isolate the external feedback circuit. This makes it possible to implement an electrically very rapid switchover between an

internal oscillator and an external feedback circuit depending on whether the generator output power is momentarily stationary or is in the process of change.

5 In addition, power amplifier 3 has in a known manner generator control inputs 9 which are used for externally controlling ICP coil generator 17. They can be used, for example, to switch ICP coil generator 17 on and off or to specify a radio-frequency power to be generated for injecting into plasma 14.
10 Moreover, generator status outputs 9' are provided for the feedback of generator data such as generator status, present output power, reflected power, overload, etc. to an external control unit (machine control), which is not shown, or to power supply unit 23 of plasma etching system 5.

The amplifier input of power amplifier 3 is now connected with ICP source 13 via a frequency-selective component 1 used as a feedback circuit at least occasionally, i.e., during power change phases. In addition, capacitors, inductors and resistors or combinations of the same may be connected and provided as voltage dividers in a manner known per se in order to attenuate the high voltages occurring at the coil of ICP source 13 to a degree suitable as an input quantity for frequency-selective component 1 or the amplifier input of power amplifier 3. Such voltage dividers are essentially known and are only suggested in Figure 2 by a decoupling capacitor 24 between the coil of ICP source 13, i.e., a signal tap, and frequency-selective component 1. It is also possible as an alternative to locate signal tap 25 in the vicinity of grounded center point or center tap 26, shown in the drawing, of the coil of ICP source 13 where correspondingly lower voltage levels prevail. Depending on the distance of signal tap 25, which may be designed, for example, as an adjustable clamping contact, from grounded center tap 26 of the coil of ICP source 13, a greater or smaller tapped voltage may be set, thus attaining favorable level ratios.

Frequency-selective component 1 is shown, for example, as a tunable arrangement of coils and capacitors, known as LC resonance circuits, which together form a band filter. As a passband, this band filter has a certain specified bandwidth of, for example, 0.1 MHz to 4 MHz and a filter characteristic 1', as is shown schematically in Figure 3.

In particular, the band filter has a resonance frequency or stationary frequency 1'' with maximum signal transmission. In the example explained, this stationary frequency 1'' amounts to 13.56 MHz and can be set exactly in particular by a quartz oscillator 6 or a piezoceramic filter element as an additional component of the band filter. In other respects, instead of LC resonance circuits, it is also possible to combine piezoceramic filter elements or other frequency-selective components, which are known per se, instead of LC resonance circuits, into a band filter having a desired filter characteristic, bandwidth and stationary frequency 1''.

The above-described arrangement of controlled power amplifier 3, matching network 2, ICP source 13, and band filter as a whole represents a feedback circuit of the type of a Meissner oscillator. In operation, it first begins to oscillate in the vicinity of stationary frequency 1'' in order to escalate to a specified output power of power amplifier 3. The phase relationship between the generator output and signal tap 25 required for the start of oscillation is set in advance one time, for example, via a delay line 7 of defined length and accordingly via a phase shift defined by the signal transit time or a phase shifter known per se instead of delay line 7. Thus it is always ensured that the coil of ICP source 13 is deattenuated in an optimum manner with a correct phase.

Via delay line 7, it is further ensured that the driving electrical voltage and the current in the coil of ICP source 13 have a resonance phase of approximately 90° with respect to each other at the location of ICP source 13.

Moreover, in practice, the resonance condition of the feedback circuit via frequency-selective component 1 is not stringent, so that a slight frequency shift in the vicinity of resonance frequency or stationary frequency 1'' is often adequate to correct the resonance condition with respect to the phase virtually automatically. Therefore it is adequate to correct the resonance condition via the external connection only approximately so that the resonance circuit begins to oscillate somewhere in the immediate vicinity of its stationary frequency 1''.

However, should all phase shifts from signal tap 25 of the coil of ICP source 13 via the band filter into the input of power amplifier 3 and via the power amplifier to second impedance transformer 18 back into the coil of ICP source 13 add up so unfavorably that the resonance circuit is in fact attenuated instead of being deattenuated, the system cannot begin to oscillate. The feedback then becomes an undesirable negative feedback instead of the desired positive feedback. The setting of this at least approximately correct phase is performed by delay line 7, whose length must therefore be set once for plasma etching system 5 so that the feedback has a constructive, i.e., deattenuating effect.

On the whole, in the event of incorrect matching to the plasma impedance, for example, during rapid power changes, the frequency of the explained feedback circuit can drop back within the passband of the band filter and thus constantly maintain a largely optimum impedance matching even with rapid impedance changes of inductively coupled plasma 14. During such rapid power changes, the explained feedback circuit is always activated and internal oscillator 4 of generator 17 is deactivated.

As soon as inductively coupled plasma 14 is then stabilized with regard to the plasma impedance and the injected plasma power, i.e., the frequency of ICP coil generator 17 returns to

the vicinity or to the value of the maximum pass band frequency which is set by stationary frequency 1''. This matching of the impedance by frequency variation occurs automatically and very rapidly within few oscillation periods of the radio-frequency AC voltage generated by the ICP coil generator, i.e., in the microsecond range.

The connection between the output of power transformer 3 and the input of second impedance transformer 18 is established by line 8, which is designed as a coaxial cable and is capable of carrying a power of several kilowatts.

In order now to inject a pulsed plasma power into the inductively coupled plasma, the output power of ICP coil generator 17 is switched on and off, i.e., pulsed, periodically, for example, with a repetition frequency of typically 10 Hz to 1 MHz, preferably 10 kHz to 100 kHz.

As an alternative, the amplitude of the envelope curve of ICP coil generator 17 output voltage may be modulated with a suitable modulation voltage. Such devices for amplitude modulation are sufficiently well-known from the high-frequency technology. For this purpose, for example, generator control input 9 is used for defining the setpoint of the radio-frequency power of ICP coil generator 17 in order thereby to supply the signal which modulates the radio-frequency power of ICP coil generator 17.

Of course, ICP coil generator 17 and the other components of plasma etching system 5 which are affected when the plasma power is pulsed must be designed in such a way that they must also be able to process the occurring peak loads (peak currents and voltages) without damage. Due to the high peak voltages at the inductive coil, the balanced supply of ICP source 13 has a particularly advantageous effect on obtaining favorable plasma properties.

Typical pulse to pause ratios, i.e., the ratio of the duration of the pulses to the duration of the pulse pauses, in the explained plasma etching process with pulsed plasma power are incidentally between 1:1 and 1:100. The amplitude of the individual radio-frequency pulses for the generation of the plasma power pulses is advantageously between 500 watts and 20,000 watts, preferably approximately 10,000 watts, the mean plasma power being set, for example, by setting the pulse to pause ratio.

As a refinement of the embodiment explained above, an additional exemplary embodiment provides that the magnetic field generated via magnetic field coil 21 is also pulsed. In this connection, however, it should be emphasized that, while the use of a constant or pulsed magnetic field is in fact advantageous for the method of the present invention for plasma etching with plasma power pulses, it is not compulsory. Depending on the individual case, an additional magnetic field may also be omitted.

In a particularly preferred manner, the pulsing of the magnetic field, which is brought about in a simple manner via suitable current pulses generated by power supply unit 23, occurs in such a way that the magnetic field is only generated when a radio-frequency power pulse is also present simultaneously for generating and injecting plasma power into inductively coupled plasma 14 at ICP source 13. As long as no plasma power is injected or no plasma is excited, as a rule, no magnetic field support is required either.

Such a time synchronization of radio-frequency power pulses for injecting plasma power into plasma 14 and current pulses through magnetic field coil 21 is explained with the aid of Figure 4. The coil current through magnetic field coil 21 is always switched on shortly before a radio-frequency power pulse and switched off again shortly after the end of this pulse. The time synchronization of the current and plasma

power pulses can be ensured in a simple manner, for example, by a pulse generator which is integrated in power supply unit 23 and is known per se, the pulse generator being provided with additional timer elements in order to apply the plasma power pulse with a specific delay of, for example, 10% of the set radio-frequency pulse duration after the power of magnetic field coil 21 is switched on or to switch this current off again with a specific delay of, for example, 10% of the set radio-frequency pulse duration after the end of the plasma power pulse. For this purpose, a further connection from power supply unit 23 and ICP coil generator 17 is provided. Such synchronization circuits and corresponding timer elements for the production of the necessary time delays are generally well-known. For this purpose, power supply unit 23 is additionally connected to ICP coil generator 17. In other respects, it should be emphasized that the duration of a current pulse through magnetic field coil 21 is advantageously always somewhat longer than the duration of a plasma power pulse.

Typical repetition rates or pulse rates depend on the inductance of magnetic field coil 21 which limits the rate of change of the coil current. A repetition rate of some 10 Hz to 10 kHz is, depending on its geometry, realistic for most magnetic field coils 21. Typical pulse to pause ratios for the plasma power pulses are between 1:1 and 1:100.

In this connection, the aperture known from German Patent 197 34 278.7 and already explained above is provided beneath magnetic field coil 21 several centimeters above substrate 10 or substrate electrode 11 which supports substrate 10. This aperture improves the uniformity of the etching over the substrate surface, in particular with a symmetrically supplied ICP source 13. At the same time, it also reduces the time-variable magnetic field -- the transients -- at the site of substrate 10. In this connection, eddy currents in the aperture ring of the aperture result in an attenuation of the

time-variable magnetic field components immediately upstream from substrate 10 so that induction processes on substrate 10 itself are attenuated.

5 Such changing magnetic fields, known as transients, could induce voltages on antenna structures on substrate 10 which could in turn result in damage to substrate 10 if it has, for example, integrated circuits or field-effect transistors in particular.

10 As a refinement of the above embodiment, an additional exemplary embodiment provides that in addition to the pulsing of the plasma power via the ICP coil generator, possibly as explained above with simultaneous use of a magnetic field that is constant over time or pulsed, now the radio-frequency power present at substrate 10 via substrate electrode 11 and produced by substrate voltage generator 12 is also pulsed and these pulsations of plasma power and substrate voltage or of plasma power, substrate voltage, and magnetic field are synchronized with each other in particular.

In particular, pulsing of the pulsed radio-frequency power injected into substrate electrode 11 preferably takes place in such a manner that a radio-frequency power is injected into
25 substrate 10 via substrate voltage generator 12 only during the time of plasma power pulses generated via ICP coil generator 17. For this purpose, for example, one or more radio-frequency power pulses are used with substrate voltage generator 12 during a plasma power pulse, thus at maximum
30 plasma density of positively charged ions and electrons.

As an alternative, the pulsing of the radio-frequency power injected into substrate electrode 11 may, however, take place in such a way that one or more substrate voltage generator
35 pulses are applied only during the interpulse periods of the plasma power pulses. In this case, radio-frequency power injected via the substrate voltage generator is injected at

the very point at which the plasma generation is not active,
thus at a minimum density of positively charged ions and
electrons but a maximum density of negatively charged ions,
known as anions, which arise from the recombination of
5 electrons and neutral particles in the excitation pauses in
the collapsing plasma. These time phases of a just shut down
plasma, the "afterglow regime" of the just shut down plasma,
are dominated by recombination processes of electrons and
positively charged ions or neutral particles. If in this
10 afterglow regime, the substrate electrode power is activated
in the form of one or more pulses, this results in desirable
wafer effects in specific applications such as, for example,
in the case of a stopped etching on a buried dielectric such
as SiO₂ with simultaneously high aspect ratios of the produced
trenches, the desirable wafer effects being brought about in
particular by the increased effect of negatively charged ions
which otherwise play practically no role in plasma etching
processes. In this connection, a particularly advantageous,
special design of this time correlation of plasma power pulses
and radio-frequency power pulses injected into substrate
electrode 11 is provided in that plasma generation essentially
takes place continuously and is interrupted only briefly in
each case in order to inject a radio-frequency power pulse
into substrate 10 via substrate voltage generator 12 within
25 these brief shutdown pauses of ICP coil generator. On the
whole, ICP coil generator 17 is interrupted for brief periods
at the repetition frequency of the appearance of the substrate
voltage generator pulses for a period of time which is longer,
in particular slightly longer, than the pulse duration of the
30 substrate voltage generator pulse. The pulse to pause ratio of
ICP coil generator 17 typically amounts in this case to 1:1 to
20:1.

As a function of the specific etching process, there exists a
35 plurality of additional possibilities for the time
synchronization or correlation of radio-frequency power pulses
injected into substrate 10 via substrate voltage generator 12

and plasma power pulses injected into inductively coupled plasma 14. Accordingly, the substrate voltage generator pulses can be injected both during the plasma power pulses as well as during the plasma power pauses, i.e., a substrate voltage generator pulse is set during each plasma power pulse and an additional substrate voltage generator pulse is set during a plasma power pause. The ratios of the pulse numbers of substrate voltage generator 12 in the "plasma on" and plasma off" phases can to a great extent be freely selected in each individual case.

An additional possibility is to apply the substrate voltage generator pulses only during falling and/or rising pulse edges of the plasma power pulses, i.e., during an incipient afterglow phase or when ramping up plasma production. The particular optimum time correlation of plasma power pulses and substrate voltage generator pulses must be determined in each individual case for the particular etching process or the etched substrate by the person skilled in the art using simple test etchings.

In a very particularly preferred manner, the time synchronization or correlation of the radio-frequency power pulses injected into substrate 10 via substrate voltage generator 17 with the plasma power pulses takes place in such a manner that the pulse duration of the radio-frequency power pulses is set so short that an individual pulse lasts only a few oscillation periods, in particular fewer than ten oscillation periods, of the high-frequency fundamental component of the high-frequency AC voltage generated in the substrate voltage generator.

In particular, a frequency of 13.56 MHz is used for the fundamental component of the radio-frequency power pulses to be injected into the substrate so the duration of one oscillation period of the high-frequency fundamental component amounts to approximately 74 ns. In the case of 10 oscillation

periods, the result is a pulse duration of the substrate voltage generator pulses of only 740 ns. Thus, at a repetition frequency of the individual pulses of the substrate voltage generator pulses of, for example, 200 kHz, corresponding to a pulse interval of 5000 ns, and a pulse length of, for example 500 ns, i.e., approximately seven oscillation periods of the high-frequency fundamental component of 13.56 MHz, a pulse to pause ratio of 1:9 is set. Accordingly, in order to attain a radio-frequency power of approximately 20 watts injected into substrate 10 on the time average, a maximum power of the substrate voltage generator of 200 watts is required, which is obtained via correspondingly large radio-frequency amplitudes.

The maximum power of the individual substrate voltage generator pulses may, however, also be far less or far greater and reach up to 1200 watts, for example. The radio-frequency power injected into substrate 10 on the time average then amounts to one-tenth of the particular maximum value of the individual pulses in the example explained.

Both the selected pulse to pause ratio and the maximum value of the power of an individual substrate voltage generator pulse are available as parameters for setting the radio-frequency power injected into substrate 10 on the time average. Therefore, either the maximum power during the substrate voltage generator pulses can be set to a fixed value of, for example, 1 kilowatt and the pulse to pause ratio controlled in such a way that a preset time average of the radio-frequency power is injected into substrate 10, or conversely the pulse to pause ratio can be fixed and the maximum power during the substrate voltage generator pulses can be controlled accordingly so that this time average for power is attained.

To implement this control, a defined setpoint of the radio-frequency power of the machine control of plasma etching system 5 to be injected into substrate 10 as an analog voltage

variable is converted into a repetition frequency of individual impulses so that the mean power given off by substrate voltage generator 12 and fed back to the machine control as a time average corresponds exactly to the defined setpoint. In order to translate an analog voltage setpoint into a frequency, voltage-frequency converters or VCOs (voltage controlled oscillators) are used.

The generation of radio-frequency pulses in the specified short-time range using substrate voltage generator 12 is technically relatively non-problematic per se since radio-frequency generators which have a rise and fall time of 30 ns and can manage pulse durations of 100 ns at peak powers of up to several kilowatts are commercially available.

The explained radio-frequency power pulses in the range of several hundred nanoseconds which are injected into substrate 10 and generated using substrate voltage generator 12 are in other respects generated to improve reproducibility in such a way that the radio-frequency signal always appears identical within one individual pulse. For this purpose, for example, three complete high-frequency oscillation periods are always cut out of the 13.56 MHz fundamental component for an individual pulse in such a way that the radio-frequency signal curve always starts with a zero crossing and a rising sine wave at the start of each individual pulse and ends with a zero crossing and also a rising sine wave at the end of the individual pulse.

As an alternative, this synchronization of individual pulse waveform and the waveform of the high-frequency fundamental component may also take place in such a way that a positive sinusoidal half-wave of the high-frequency fundamental component just starts at the start of an individual pulse and a positive sinusoidal half-wave just ends at the end of an individual pulse, i.e., the individual pulse includes one more positive sinusoidal half-wave than negative sinusoidal half-

waves. Conversely, by corresponding synchronization under otherwise identical circumstances, one more negative sinusoidal half-wave than positive sinusoidal half-waves can also be placed in an individual pulse by beginning and ending the individual pulse with a negative sinusoidal half-wave of the radio-frequency signal.

Without the explained synchronization, the number of positive and negative sinusoidal half-waves in the generated radio-frequency pulses could be different, differences of up to two sinusoidal half-waves being possible in borderline cases. In particular, with a low number of oscillation periods within one radio-frequency pulse generated via substrate voltage generator 17, this would result in stochastic deviations of the waveforms of the individual pulses and in particular to slowly fluctuating ratios of the number of positive and negative sinusoidal half-waves, which has a negative influence on the reproducibility of the overall etching process.

Therefore, in order to ensure that the same high-frequency voltage curve is always present within one individual pulse of substrate voltage generator 12, the electronic circuit explained with the aid of Figure 5 is preferably implemented in this embodiment additionally integrated with substrate voltage generator 12 for the synchronization of the individual pulses with the high-frequency fundamental component.

In particular, the circuit according to Figure 5 first provides a control device 32 having an integrated frequency generator which defines a rectangular pulse signal having the frequency with which the individual pulses are to be injected into substrate 10, for example, 200 kHz. As an alternative, however, this repetition frequency may also - with a preselected fixed peak pulse power of substrate voltage generator 12 - be derived from the defined setpoint of an average power of the system control of plasma etching system 5 in such a way that the average power given off by substrate

voltage generator 12 in the form of individual pulses and returned to the machine control corresponds to the average power defined as the setpoint, which, for example, is attained by a simple voltage-frequency conversion using appropriate calibration.

The square-wave output voltage of the frequency generator of control device 32 is further first converted into an assigned frequency in a voltage-frequency converter 34 which is known per se, and simultaneously applied to the D-input (delay input) and the clear input (CLR input) of a delay flipflop 35. Thus, delay flipflop 35 remains cleared (0-level at Clear) and can also not be set (0-level at D-input) as long as the square-wave voltage has a 0-level.

Additionally present at the clock input of delay flipflop 35, via an adjustable phase shifter 30, is an oscillator voltage of a radio-frequency generator 31, which may possibly be suitably conditioned, the radio-frequency generator generating a high-frequency AC voltage of, for example, 13.56 MHz. In commercially available RF generators, this output is identified as the CEX-output (common exciter).

As soon as the square-wave signal of the frequency generator has now switched from 0 to 1, delay flipflop 35 is set each time by the next, subsequent positive sinusoidal half-wave of the radio-frequency AC voltage of RF generator 31 and remains set until the square-wave signal of the frequency generator again switches back from 1 to 0 and resets delay flipflop 35 via the clear input using 0-level.

The output of delay flipflop 35 is further connected to the clock input of a monoflop 33 in such a way that when delay flipflop 35 is set, monoflop 33 simultaneously emits an individual pulse, whose pulse duration can be freely selected to a great extent via a resistor-capacitor combination

integrated in monoflop 33; in particular, it can be selected to be very small, i.e., smaller than 100 ns. This individual pulse of monoflop 33 is supplied to the pulse input of radio-frequency generator 31 and causes it to emit a radio-frequency output pulse, i.e., a voltage packet comprised of few high-frequency oscillation periods, during the time the individual pulse is applied to generator output 36. Thus the output signal at generator output 36 is always in synchrony with the high-frequency fundamental component of internal radio-frequency generator 31 so that the output signal of substrate voltage generator 12 at output 36, i.e., the substrate voltage generator pulses generated and injected via substrate 10 always have the same appearance.

The described combination of delay flipflop 35 and monoflop 33 guarantees that, for each square-wave period of the frequency generator, only one individual pulse of a preselected duration is generated which is synchronized for the radio-frequency AC voltage of radio-frequency generator 31. Thus substrate voltage generator 12 generates output pulses of a duration that can be set and always have the same waveform, and which are synchronized with the high-frequency fundamental component of radio-frequency generator 31.

Phase shifter 30 between CEX output of radio-frequency generator 31 and the clock input of delay flipflop 34 makes it possible to vary the phase angle of the high-frequency oscillation periods contained in each individual pulse or output pulse of radio-frequency generator 31 within the pulse width. In particular, the phase shifter can thus be adjusted in such a way that the high-frequency oscillation periods of the AC voltage start precisely with the onset of the output pulse of substrate voltage generator 12 and end with the decay of this output pulse so that each output pulse includes precisely one complete number of oscillation periods, i.e., sinusoidal half-waves. In the simplest case, phase shifter 30 is a coaxial cable of a defined length as a delay line.

In other respects, the circuit described in Figure 5 is only exemplary. It can also be replaced by other devices, for example, a synchronous divider which divides the frequency of the oscillator within the generator and derives from it individual pulses and pauses between individual pulses.

The advantageous effect of the radio-frequency power pulses which have a very short duration, in particular, and a high amplitude, used in the above embodiments, and which are injected into substrate 10 via substrate voltage generator 12, is based on the following mechanisms in plasma 14:

As is well-known, a negative DC voltage arises in relation to plasma 14 and in relation to earth potential on a substrate electrode 11 exposed to a plasma 14 to which a high-frequency voltage or a radio-frequency power is applied via substrate voltage generator 12. This DC voltage identified as "bias voltage" or "self-bias" results from the different mobility of electrons and positive ions in the electrical alternating field. While the light electrons instantaneously follow the radio-frequency alternating field and can reach substrate electrode 11 very easily during the positive half-waves of the AC voltage, this is increasingly less possible for the essentially heavier positive ions during the negative half-waves of the AC voltage as the frequency of the electrical alternating field increases. Consequently, a negative charge builds up on substrate electrode 11 through the surplus of arriving electrons in relation to the arriving positive ions until a saturation value of the charge occurs and the same number of electrons as positively charged ions reach substrate electrode 11 on the time average. The substrate electrode voltage corresponds to this saturation value of the negative charge.

To explain this effect, Figure 6 shows a simple equivalent electrical circuit diagram for a substrate electrode surface element 37 exposed to a plasma 14 and supplied with a radio-

frequency power from substrate voltage generator 12. The interface to the ground is via plasma 14 which is symbolized by the parallel connection of resistor R and diode D. Diode D takes the effect of the self-rectification by the varying mobility of electrons and ions in plasma 14 into account; resistor R takes the energy dissipation into plasma 14 (equivalent resistance) into account. Capacitance C (reactance) is essentially an instrumental constant of the structure of substrate electrode 11.

With a pulse operation using high-frequency substrate voltage generator pulses, a substrate electrode voltage accordingly builds up at substrate electrode 11 at the start of each pulse, the substrate electrode voltage reaching a saturation value after a number of radio-frequency oscillation periods and persisting there until the end of the pulse. After the end of the radio-frequency oscillation packet, this substrate electrode voltage then decays again during the interpulse period. A typical number of oscillation periods needed to attain a stationary substrate electrode voltage is approximately 20 to 100 oscillation periods at a radio frequency of 13.56 MHz and a high density inductively coupled plasma 14 which is in contact with the substrate electrode.

When very short individual pulses are used, which encompass only a few oscillation periods, preferably fewer than ten oscillation periods, the saturation value of the substrate electrode voltage is still not attained and the substrate electrode voltage is still in the process of rising after the pulse. This is explained in Figure 7 which shows how the substrate electrode voltage U_{bias} develops as a function of the number of oscillation periods n of the fundamental component of the high-frequency AC voltage (13.56 MHz) injected into substrate 10.

The finally attained level of the local voltage in the saturation case after many oscillation periods is essentially

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a function of equivalent resistance R (energy dissipation into the plasma) and capacitance C of the capacitor (reactive power component) according to Figure 6. The saturation value of the substrate electrode voltage, which arises on the substrate surface after many oscillation periods, is thus to a great degree a function of plasma resistance R (see Figure 6), i.e., of the energy dissipation into plasma 14, which, however, is as a rule laterally non-homogeneous over substrate 10.

Thus local differences occur with regard to the energy dissipation into plasma 14, for example, between the center and edge of a substrate 10, which results in voltage gradients between various surface areas of substrate 10. These voltage gradients are essentially further intensified in that the surface of substrate 10 is electrically insulating at least in some areas during etching or is only weakly conductive as a result of frequently used dielectric masking layers (photoresist, SiO₂ mask, etc.).

In this respect, substrate surface 10 no longer shows an equipotential surface due to the explained effects, but rather voltage gradients from the substrate center to the substrate edge have the effect of an electrical lens in relation to plasma 14, which ultimately results in a deflection of the ions accelerated to the substrate from the vertical and accordingly in a fault of the produced etching profiles.

The very short substrate electrode power pulses used therefore bring about considerable homogenization of the substrate electrode voltage over the substrate surface independently of locally possibly varying plasma resistances R. This is illustrated in Figure 7 by the linear waveform in the case of only a small number oscillation periods N. As a whole, the explained measures result in a drastic reduction of voltage gradients on the substrate surface, an elimination of the undesirable electrical lens effect and finally clearly reduced profile slopes, for example in trenches structured out of the

substrate.

Moreover, relatively long interpulse periods after each relatively short individual pulse ensure that a previously attained negative substrate electrode voltage is at least to a great degree reduced again. Each substrate electrode power pulse thus starts from a uniform, defined, discharged initial state of the substrate surface.

In other respects, the described pulsing of the substrate electrode power causes only a fraction of the substrate electrode voltage to be reached which would otherwise occur, i.e., on reaching the saturation value after many oscillation periods. If therefore, high or very high substrate electrode voltages of, for example, 20 volts to 100 volts on the time average, are to be implemented, it is necessary to operate with correspondingly high radio-frequency powers during the individual pulses.

List of Reference Symbols

- 1 frequency-selective component
- 1' filter characteristic
- 1'' stationary frequency
- 2 matching network
- 3 power amplifier
- 4 quartz oscillator
- 5 plasma etching system
- 6 quartz oscillator
- 7 delay power
- 8 line
- 9 Generator control input
- 9' Generator status output

- 10 substrate
- 11 substrate electrode
- 12 substrate voltage generator
- 13 ICP source
- 14 inductively coupled plasma
- 15 reactor
- 16 first impedance transformer
- 17 ICP coil generator
- 18 second impedance transformer
- 19 gas supply
- 20 gas discharge

- 21 magnetic field coil
- 22 spacer
- 23 power supply unit
- 24 decoupling capacitor
- 25 signal tap
- 26 center tap

- 30 phase shifter
- 31 radio-frequency generator
- 32 control device

- 33 monoflop
- 34 voltage-frequency converter
- 35 delay flipflop
- 36 generator output
- 37 substrate electrode surface

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Claims

1. A device for etching a substrate (10), a silicon body in particular, using an inductively coupled plasma (14), having an ICP source (13) for generating a radio-frequency electromagnetic alternating field and a reactor (15) for generating the inductively coupled plasma (14) from reactive particles by the action of the radio-frequency electromagnetic alternating field on a reactive gas, characterized in that a first means is provided for generating plasma power pulses to be injected into the inductively coupled plasma (14) by the ICP source (13).
2. The device according to Claim 1, characterized in that the first means is an ICP coil generator (17) which generates a variably adjustable, pulsed radio-frequency power with regard to the pulse to pause ratio of the plasma power pulses and/or the individual pulse power.
3. The device according to Claim 2, characterized in that an impedance transformer (18) in the form of a matching network, in particular a balanced symmetrical matching network is provided for matching an initial impedance of the ICP coil generator (17) to a plasma impedance which is dependent on the individual pulse power of the plasma power pulses to be injected.
4. The device according to Claim 3, characterized in that the impedance transformer (18) is preset in such a way that with a specified maximum individual pulse power of the plasma power pulses to be injected into the inductively coupled plasma (14) in the case of stationary power, an at least largely optimum impedance matching is ensured.

5. The device according to Claim 2, characterized in that components are integrated into the ICP coil generator (17) which, via a variation of the frequency of the generated electromagnetic alternating field, perform impedance matching as a function of the individual pulse power to be injected.
6. The device according to Claim 5, characterized in that the ICP coil generator (17) is provided with an automatically acting feedback circuit having a frequency-selective component (1), the feedback circuit having at least one controlled power amplifier, a frequency-selective band filter with a stationary frequency (1'') to be attained and a delay line (7) or a phase shifter.
7. The device according to at least one of the preceding claims, characterized in that a second means is provided which generates a static or time-variable, particularly pulsed magnetic field between the substrate (10) and the ICP source (13).
8. The device according to Claim 7, characterized in that the first means is a magnetic field coil (21) with an associated power supply unit (23) or a permanent magnet, the magnetic field generated by the magnetic field coil (21) via the power supply unit (23) being time-variable, capable of being pulsed in particular.
9. The device according to Claim 1, characterized in that a substrate voltage generator (12) is provided with which a continuous or time-variable radio-frequency power, a pulsed radio-frequency power in particular, can be applied to a substrate (10) arranged on a substrate electrode (11).

10. The device according to Claim 9,
characterized in that a first impedance transformer (12)
is provided for impedance matching between the substrate
voltage generator (12) and the substrate (10).
11. The device according to at least one of the preceding
claims,
characterized in that the ICP coil generator (17) is
connected to the substrate voltage generator (12) and/or
the power supply unit (23).
12. A method for etching a substrate (10), a silicon body in
particular, having a device according to at least one of
the preceding claims,
characterized in that a pulsed radio-frequency power is
injected into the inductively coupled plasma (14) as a
pulsed plasma power, at least from time to time.
13. The method according to Claim 12,
characterized in that the pulsed plasma power is injected
via an ICP source (13) to which a radio-frequency
electromagnetic alternating field having a constant
frequency or a frequency which varies within a frequency
range is applied around a stationary frequency (1'').
14. The method according to Claim 12,
characterized in that the pulsed radio-frequency power is
generated with an ICP coil generator (17) which is pulse-
operated with a frequency of 10 Hz to 1 MHz and pulse to
pause ratio of 1:1 to 1:100.
15. The method according to Claim 12,
characterized in that a plasma power of 300 watts to 5000
watts on the time average is injected into the
inductively coupled plasma (14) and that the generated
individual pulse powers of the radio-frequency power
pulses are between 300 watts and 20 kilowatts, in

particular 2 kilowatts to 10 kilowatts.

16. The method according to Claim 12 or 13, characterized in that the pulsing of the injected radio-frequency power is accompanied by a change of the frequency of the injected radio-frequency power, the frequency change being controlled in such a way that the plasma power injected into the inductively coupled plasma (14) during the pulsing is maximized.
17. The method according to at least one of Claims 12 to 16, characterized in that during the etching, a static or time-variable, in particular periodically varying or pulsed magnetic field is generated, the direction of which is at least approximately or predominantly parallel to a direction defined by the connecting line of the substrate (10) and the inductively coupled plasma (14).
18. The method according to Claim 17, characterized in that the magnetic field is generated in such a way that it extends into the area of the substrate (10) and the inductively coupled plasma (14) and has a field strength amplitude between 10 MTesla and 100 mTesla in the interior of the reactor (15).
19. The method according to Claim 17 or 18, characterized in that a magnetic field pulsed at a frequency of 10 Hz to 20 kHz is generated via the power supply unit (23), the pulse to pause ratio when the magnetic field is pulsed being between 1:1 and 1:100.
20. The method according to at least one of the preceding claims, characterized in that a constant or time-variable, in particular pulsed, radio-frequency power is applied to the substrate (10) via a substrate voltage generator (12).

21. The method according to Claim 20,
characterized in that the pulse duration of the radio-frequency power injected into the substrate is between one to one hundred times, one to ten times in particular, the period of oscillation of the high-frequency fundamental component of the radio-frequency power.
22. The method according to Claim 20 or 21,
characterized in that the radio-frequency power applies a time-average power of 5 watts to 100 watts to the substrate (10), the maximum power of an individual radio-frequency power pulse being one to 20 times, in particular twice to 10 times, the time average power.
23. The method according to Claim 21,
characterized in that the frequency of the injected radio-frequency power is between 100 kHz to 100 MHz, 13.56 MHz in particular, and that the pulse to pause ratio of the injected radio-frequency pulses is between 1:1 and 1:100, 1:1 and 1:10 in particular.
24. The method according to at least one of the preceding claims,
characterized in that the pulsing of the injected plasma power and the pulsing of the radio-frequency power injected into the substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12) or the pulsing of the magnetic field, the pulsing of the injected plasma power and the pulsing of the radio-frequency power injected into the substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12) are time-correlated or synchronized with each other.
25. The method according to Claim 24,
characterized in that the correlation takes place in such a way that the magnetic field is first applied, before a radio-frequency power pulse of the ICP coil generator (17), and the magnetic field is switched off again after

the decay of this radio-frequency power pulse.

26. The method according to Claim 24 or 25, characterized in that the correlation takes place in such a way that during a radio-frequency power pulse of the ICP coil generator (17), the radio-frequency power injected into the substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12) is switched off and/or that during a radio-frequency power pulse injected into the substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12), the radio-frequency power injected via the ICP coil generator (17) is switched off.
27. The method according to Claim 24 or 25, characterized in that the synchronization takes place in such a way that during each time of a plasma power pulse injected into the plasma (14) via the ICP coil generator (17), radio-frequency pulses injected into the substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12) are also applied to the substrate (10).

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28. The method according to Claim 24 or 25,
characterized in that the correlation takes place in such
a way that the radio-frequency power injected into the
substrate (10) via the substrate voltage generator (12)
is generated in each case during a power rise and/or a
power drop of a radio-frequency power pulse injected into
the plasma (14) via the ICP coil generator (17).
29. The method according to Claim 24 or 25,
characterized in that the correlation takes place in such
a way that during the time of the plasma power pulses
injected into the plasma (14) via the ICP coil generator
(17) and during the time of the pulse pauses between the
individual plasma power pulses injected into the plasma
(14) via the ICP coil generator (17), at least one radio-
frequency power pulse injected into the substrate (10)
via the substrate voltage generator (12) is applied to
the substrate (10) in each case.
30. The method according to one of the preceding claims,
characterized in that the etching takes place in
alternating etching and passivation steps at a process
pressure of 5 μ bar to 100 μ bar.

Abstract

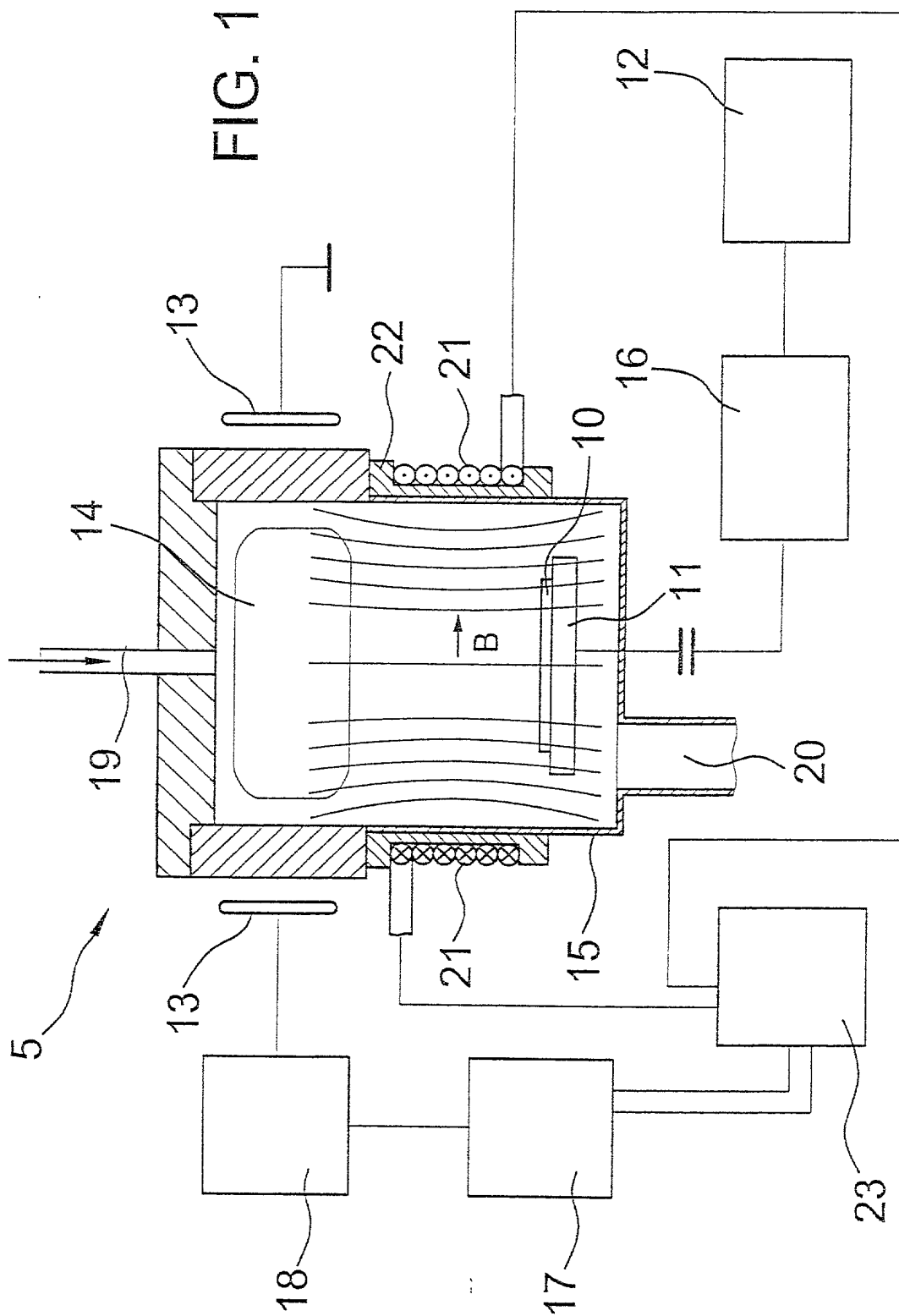
5 A method and a device suitable for implementing this method
for etching a substrate (10), a silicon body in particular,
using an inductively coupled plasma (14) are proposed. For
this purpose, a radio-frequency electromagnetic alternating
field is generated with an ICP source (13), the alternating
field generating an inductively coupled plasma (14) of
reactive particles in a reactor (15). The inductively coupled
10 plasma (14) arises by the action of the radio-frequency
electromagnetic alternating field on a reactive gas.
Furthermore, a device is provided with which a plasma power
injected into the inductively coupled plasma (14) via the
radio-frequency electromagnetic alternating field with the ICP
5 source (13) is capable of being pulsed so that at least from
time to time a pulsed radio-frequency power can be injected
into the inductively coupled plasma (14) as a pulsed radio-
frequency power. In addition, the pulsed plasma power can be
combined or correlated with a pulsed magnetic field and/or a
0 pulsed substrate electrode power.

Figure 1

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Time axis t

Magnetic coil current (current pulses)



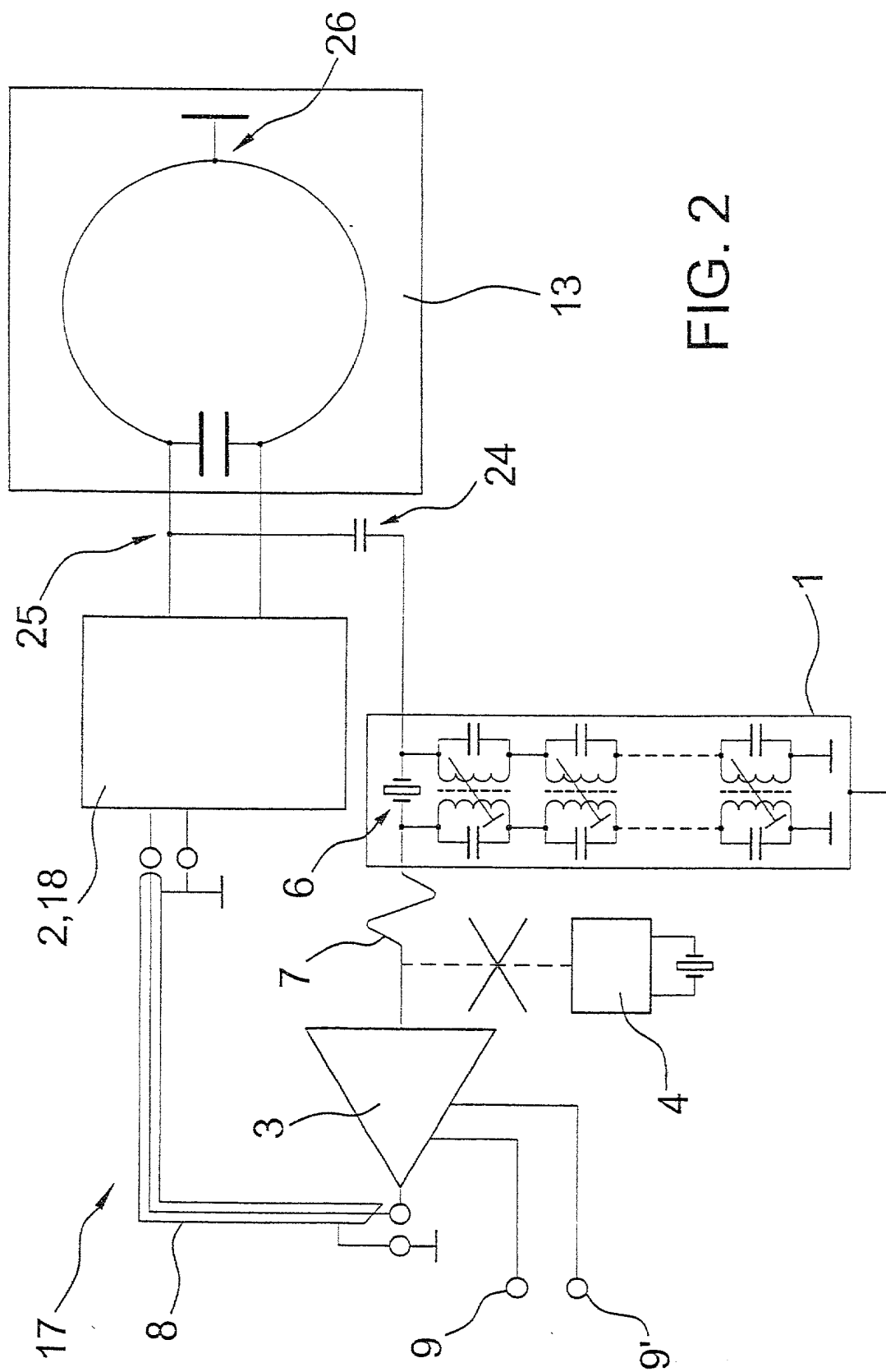


FIG. 2

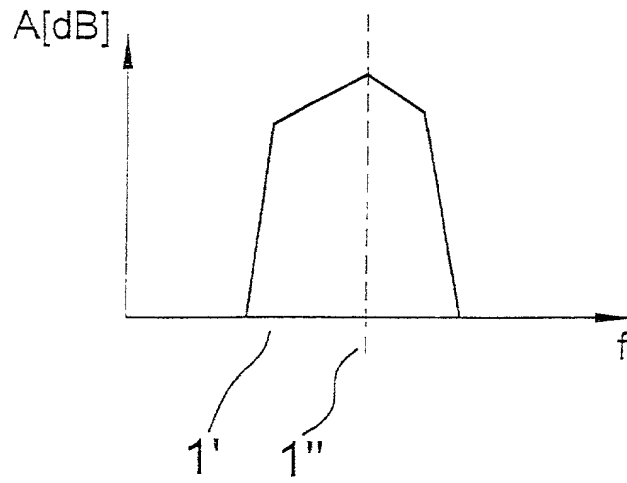


FIG. 3

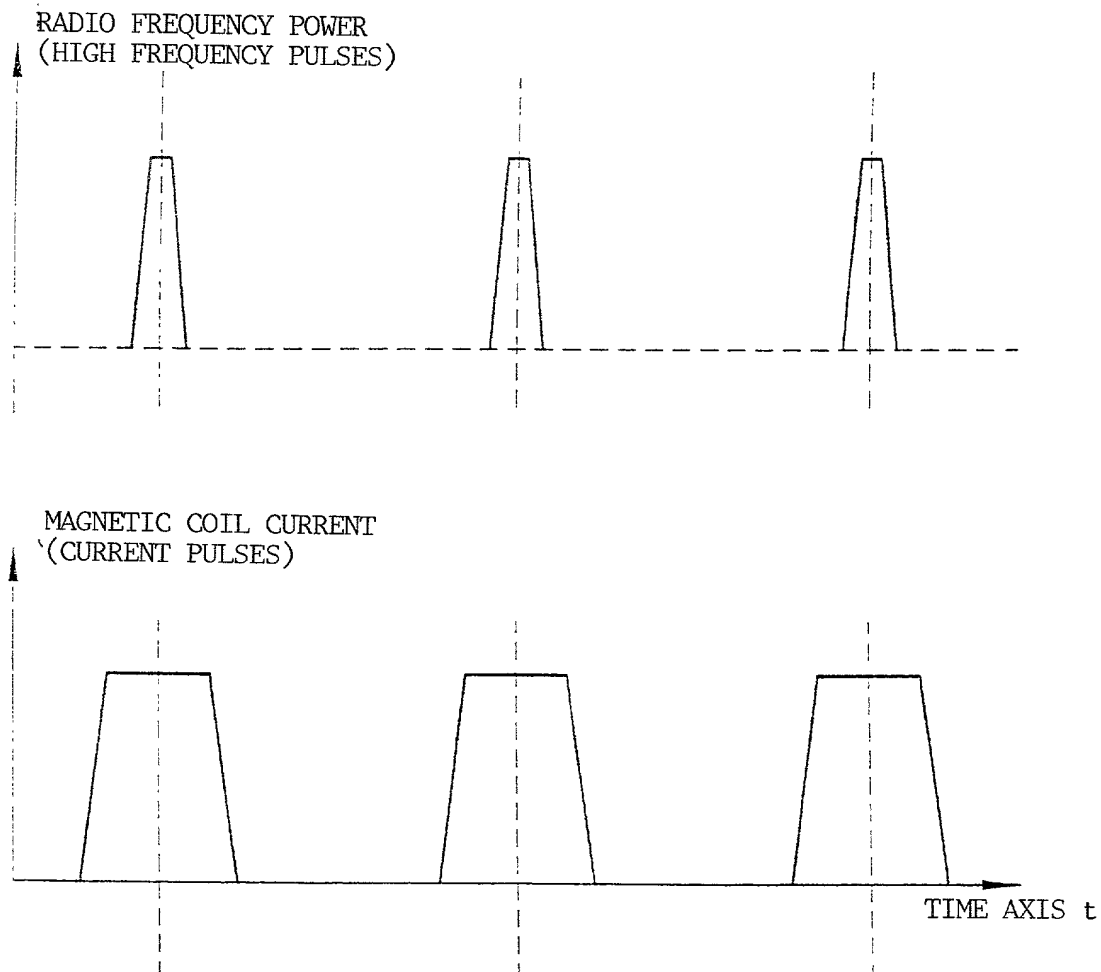


FIG. 4

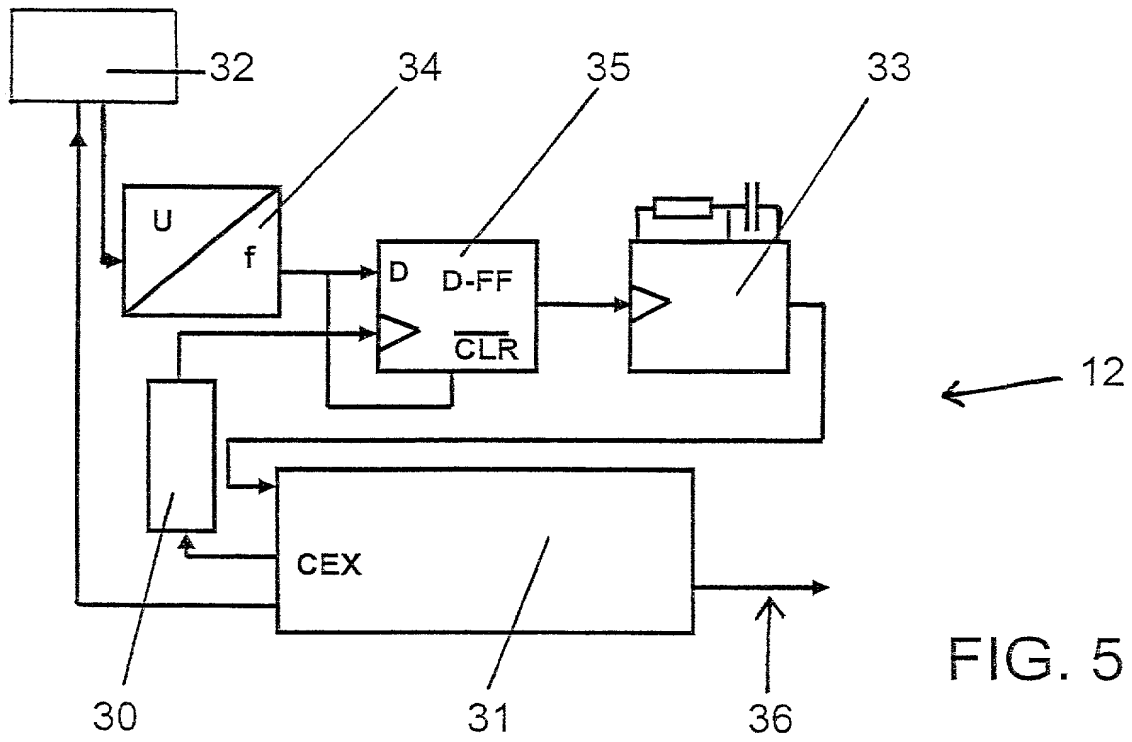


FIG. 5

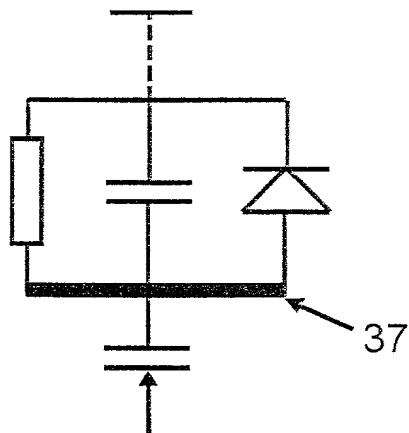


FIG. 6

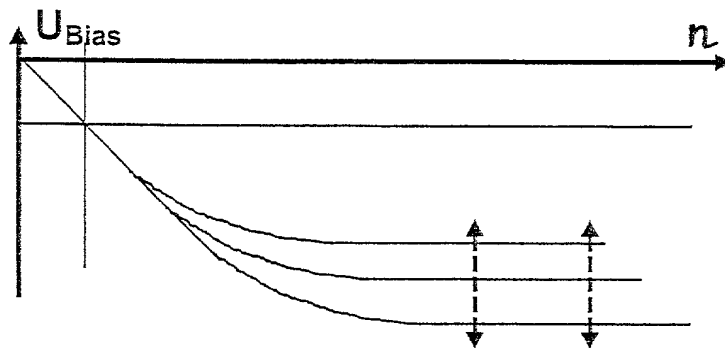


FIG. 7

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

I believe I am an original, first and joint inventor of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled **DEVICE AND METHOD FOR ETCHING A SUBSTRATE USING AN INDUCTIVELY COUPLED PLASMA**, for which an application for Letters Patent was filed as PCT International Application Number **PCT/DE00/01835** on June 6, 2000, an English translation of the specification being filed herewith.

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56(a).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code § 119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate or of any PCT international applications(s) designating at least one country other than the United States of America listed below and have also identified below any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate or any PCT international application(s) designating at least one country other than the United States of America filed by me on the same subject matter having a filing date before that of the application(s) of which priority is claimed:

PRIOR FOREIGN APPLICATION(S)

<u>Number</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Day/month/year filed</u>	<u>Priority Claimed Under 35 USC § 119</u>
199 33 842.6	Germany	20 July 1999	Yes

And I hereby appoint Richard L. Mayer (Reg. No. 22,490) and Gerard A. Messina (Reg. No. 35,952) my attorneys with full power of substitution and revocation, to prosecute this

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application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith.

Please address all communications regarding this application to:

②

KENYON & KENYON
One Broadway
New York, New York 10004

Please direct all telephone calls to Richard L. Mayer at (212) 425-7200.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful and false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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